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ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of a recent survey of teacher preparation courses in Queensland, Australia, an analysis of the literature on course content, and recommendations. Recommendations address course content, the nature of practical training experiences, the need for institutions of higher education to reconceptualize teacher preparation courses to meet changes in the school population, and the length of teacher preparation programs. Among conclusions of the survey are that, currently, 3-year teacher preparation courses provide a general orientation to school and child development and place heavy reliance on field experiences but provide relatively little information about pedagogical responses to learners with special educational needs. Among the nine major recommendations are: (1) that higher education institutions incorporate principles and practices for teaching children with special needs into general education studies; (2) that staff with academic qualifications and expertise in special education be members of teaching teams; (3) that higher education institutions require units of study to prepare teachers to support pupils with special needs; (4) that higher education institutions ensure that graduating teachers demonstrate a range of teaching competencies; and (5) that the 3-year undergraduate course be extended by one year and the 1-year graduate course by one semester. (DB)

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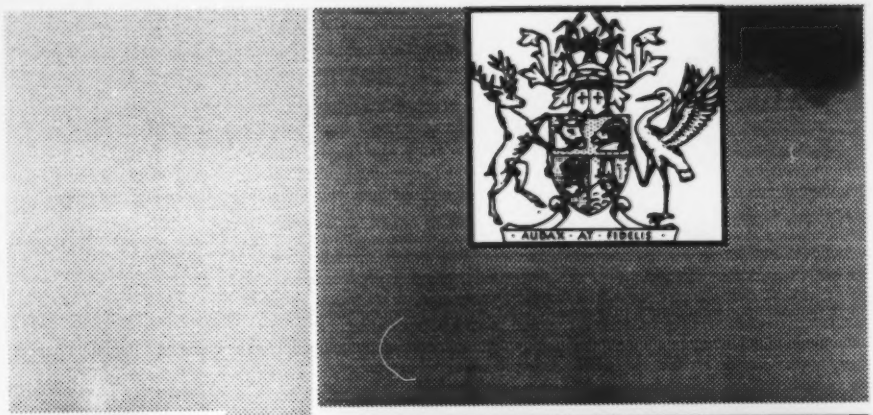
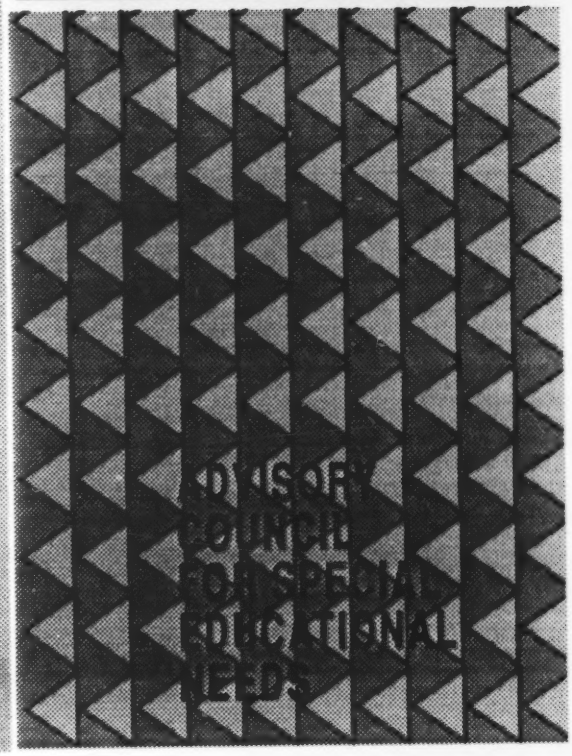


THE WAY AHEAD



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The Way Ahead

Meeting a wider range of educational needs in regular schools

Implications for preservice teacher education

Produced by Guidance & Counselling Services, 56 Little Edward Street,
Spring Hill 4004, October 1990.

Advisory Council
for Special
Educational Needs

Dr R. J. Andrews, MBE
Chairman

The Honourable P.J. Braddy
Minister for Education

Dear Mr Braddy

We are pleased to forward to you our report titled, *The Way Ahead: Meeting a wider range of educational needs in regular schools. Implications for preservice teacher education.* This report, on teacher preparation to meet the personal and learning needs of one in five pupils in regular schools, follows advice on this topic given on two previous occasions by the Council. It reflects the high level of significance which Council places on teacher preparation courses meeting criteria which are considered to be prerequisites to successful school-level intervention on behalf of special needs children.

Apart from providing the results of a recent survey of teacher preparation courses in Queensland, the report includes an analysis of the literature on current and required course content addressing the issue under consideration. It also sets out Council's view on the changes advocated. These include course content, the nature of practical training experiences, the needs for institutions of higher education to reconceptualise teacher preparation courses to meet the challenge of a significantly changed school population, and the length of teacher preparation programs.

On the question of length of teacher preparation courses, Council supports the extension of preservice training by one or two semesters in the case of one year end-on and three year courses respectively. It does so in the context of the additional content time and practical training available being targeted to improving school and classroom management and classroom teaching, with the clear objective of providing better schooling outcomes for pupils.

In presenting the report, Council acknowledges the important contribution of Dr Judith Smith in its preparation.

Yours sincerely

R.J. ANDREWS
15 November 1990

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Membership of the Fourth Council

1 The current contexts of teacher preparation

Teacher preparation: a national concern

The Advisory Council for Special Educational Needs has provided advice to the Minister for Education on the topic of teacher preparation for special education on at least two previous occasions. The Council has also collaborated with other bodies in the past to press home its concerns about a general lack of content and practical experiences in preservice teacher education courses dealing with why and how teachers need to assist pupils with disabilities and learning difficulties in regular primary and secondary schools. Indeed, lack of progress in achieving wide, and at the same time specific, changes to preservice courses to meet more effectively the educational needs of these pupils is of national concern.

There is little evidence to suggest that this issue has been adequately addressed in higher education institutions in the last decade. The reality of failure by teachers to provide appropriate educational experiences to assist pupils with special educational needs in regular schools is almost certain dislocation of schooling and school failure, and lack of feelings of personal worth of these children and adolescents. These outcomes are often followed by unemployment or underemployment, and economic hardship as adults, as well as economic cost to the community.

Social issues impacting on teacher preparation

School systems, and teachers, are today facing many demands to ensure their educational programs are responsive to national and world developments. These include curriculum change related to major macro- and micro- restructuring of the economy; vast social changes resulting from changing societal values, migration, and a developing Aboriginal self-determination, and an increasingly multicultural society; and rapid technological development.

An important trend in providing for children and adolescents with special educational needs is the growing acceptance by schools and administrators of responsibility for the programs and provisions for these children. Teachers in regular schools, with the acceptance of social justice as an educational goal, must cater for all pupils.

The potential of teacher education courses to respond to these developments and in turn contribute to change in education is widely recognised. As a result, the pattern of social, economic and political change has caused many parents, teachers and political leaders, and many in the community to claim that preservice courses should deal with a wider range of content and practical issues than in the past. In particular, it is argued that teacher preparation should address as a matter of urgency the ways teachers can meet the needs of a changing school population.

There has also been criticism of the higher education institutions which provide teacher preparation courses. Claims have been made that courses have become estranged from developments in the

community and schooling itself, and have failed to prepare teachers-in-training to meet the changing demands in schools. Preservice courses, it is argued, should be responsive to these developments in management and organisation, and to newly emerging roles of teachers.

There is a requirement for teachers to be prepared to address the needs of pupils resulting from ethnicity, social background, disability, specific learning difficulties, and personal problems. As a result, higher education institutions face new pressures to take action to ensure teachers-in-training are prepared for increased multiculturalism in schools, advances in technology relevant to children's learning, and social and employment changes. They are also expected to ensure graduating teachers are competent to cater for pupils with special educational needs in regular school classrooms.

Professional studies to prepare teachers to respond to these changes are central to change in preservice teacher education courses. For their part, teacher education institutions have in the past sought to provide courses for the teachers-in-training which have a balance of professional and curriculum studies, personal development studies, and teaching practice.

One consequence of the debate about the nature and content of preservice teacher education courses is a claim that teachers-in-training should spend more time in professional preparation prior to employment as teachers. Higher education institutions and teacher registering authorities argue for the extension of three-year teacher preparation courses to four years, and of two semester end-on courses to three semesters. The reasons given for extending these courses include the need to ensure beginning teachers have the basic knowledge and expertise to respond to the demands of their profession and have a comprehensive knowledge of curriculum areas expected of them in the 1990s.

Current reviews of teacher preparation courses

At present many institutions of higher education are engaging in major assessments and revisions of their courses for teacher preparation. Many of these reviews are a consequence of the amalgamation of higher education institutions recently required by the Commonwealth Government. Thus, many course reviews have been undertaken to ensure conformity with 'new' institutional guidelines, some of which were developed without consideration of the requirements of teacher education courses. It is not yet clear whether all these institutional guidelines provide the most appropriate frameworks for determining courses for the professional preparation of teachers.

A further important development in Queensland is the recent issue by the Board of Teacher Registration of institutional guidelines which set out expectations for important changes to preservice teacher preparation courses. The roles and responsibilities of the Board should be enhanced so that it is well-placed to provide a strong lead in specifying registration requirements. Employers of teachers should also specify clearly the competencies they desire teachers to demonstrate when they have completed their preservice preparation programs.

It is within these contexts that the Council has undertaken this review of this important topic. The review included an assessment of essential components required in preservice education courses to ensure appropriate preparation of all teachers to educate children and adolescents with special educational needs. The views of the Council developed from this review are set out in section 2.

The Council has also examined existing and proposed courses of preservice teacher education offered by institutions of higher education throughout Queensland. A summary of the survey is contained in section 3, while section 4 details issues which Council believes should be addressed to ensure teachers-in-training receive appropriate preparation in matters which are essential in the education of pupils with special educational needs in regular schools.

2 Content for courses preparing teachers to educate pupils with special educational needs in regular schools

One critical element of preservice teacher education is the preparation of teachers to educate children and adolescents with special educational needs in regular classrooms. The Schools Council (1989) report, *Teacher Quality*, notes:

> *"...some 20 per cent of students at any one time will present with disabilities and difficulties which affect their learning. ...These demands (on classroom teachers) require that training equip all teachers with the appropriate basic knowledge and skills necessary to teach children with disabilities and difficulties who may be enrolled in regular classrooms and to access appropriate additional support services to assist these students." (p.49)*

To provide true equality of opportunity in schooling, every learner requires an educational program designed to meet his or her unique needs. Thus the teaching and learning experiences established for any pupil must be viewed by teachers as part of a pattern of changing needs for teaching and learning required by all learners in their classes. The nature of classroom experiences is also one of the major determinants of achievement by pupils. Teachers, therefore, must have at least a basic level of specialised knowledge and the basic range of teaching skills needed to ensure rewarding learning experiences for all pupils, including those with special educational needs.

A summary of the findings of recent overviews of teacher education relevant to the education of learners with special educational needs is set out in the Appendix. The summary identifies areas that classroom teachers and other observers consider teachers currently lack information and skills to assist these pupils in regular schools. The Appendix also summarises in a

comparative way the knowledge, skills and experiences which researchers and tertiary teaching staff consider should be included in preservice education courses to prepare teachers-in-training for their responsibilities to these learners.

From these findings the Council proposes that institutions of higher education should ensure all preservice education graduates have the following knowledge and competencies:

- values and philosophical stances necessary to ensure a commitment to and understanding of all pupils, and particularly those with special needs
- a knowledge of the characteristics of child development and the social contexts in which education occurs as well as understanding and ability to cater for individual differences in development, learning and behaviour
- knowledge and understanding of pupils with special educational needs
- competencies to identify and respond to individual learner needs, especially in basic skills, and to manage classrooms in ways that promote individual learning
- strategies to respond effectively to the social and personal needs of their pupils
- the ability to cooperate and communicate effectively in all school, home and community networks which support pupils with special educational needs.

Within these areas of teacher knowledge and competencies, the Council has identified the following components which it proposes should be included as content in all courses of teacher preparation.

Teacher preparation components

An understanding of the social contexts of education

Teachers-in-training require an understanding of the social contexts in which schooling occurs to underpin their knowledge and interpretation of education theory and practice. The broad range of content and experiences included in teacher preparation courses help provide this background. This area of study should precede more specialised and focused information and experiences which prepare teachers-in-training specifically to educate children with special educational needs.

To become an effective teacher of pupils with special educational needs, prospective teachers require a vision of excellence in education and of social justice for all pupils. To understand children with special educational needs, teachers-in-training require insights into the social issues associated with schooling.

Professional studies will therefore provide teachers-in-training with a knowledge and understanding of cultural, philosophical and educational issues to ensure they develop these appropriate insights. Students must also have a commitment to and concern for the personal and social welfare of the pupils they teach, and to the teaching-learning process.

Knowledge of the individual and developmental characteristics of learners

Professional studies will include information about the characteristics of child development, learning and individual differences. These studies provide an early basis for understanding by teachers-in-training of the wide range of pupil needs, and therefore underpin a commitment to and insights into meeting the needs of children. Knowledge of child development and the nature of learning and pedagogy is fundamental to an understanding of the causes and consequences of learning, and of social and personal difficulties.

This knowledge also leads to an understanding of the effects of disability on children's learning and behaviour. Effective responses to individual learners and their needs can evolve through subsequent coursework which refines and enhances understanding by teachers-in-training.

Knowledge of the nature of special educational needs and how to address them

Teachers-in-training will attain a basic knowledge of developmental delay and the nature of disabilities. They should have an understanding of the range of disabilities and social and cultural circumstances which inhibit learning in the classroom. This knowledge provides a foundation for developing teaching approaches to assist pupils whose learning has been constrained because of these factors. Teachers, through a knowledge of the range of children's needs, come to understand their difficulties in different areas of the curriculum.

Teachers also require a knowledge of methods of assessing needs, of implementing effective teaching and learning strategies, and of evaluating teaching and learning outcomes. They need a clear understanding of the nature of specialist support services available to assist learners with special educational needs, how to access these services, and how to program cooperatively with staff from other disciplines.

While most teachers-in-training will not pursue in-depth studies into specific disabilities and more specialised teaching areas, this should not preclude some from undertaking such studies as part of their preservice training, where specialised courses are available. Indeed, one of the benefits of extending preservice education to four years would be to provide more teachers-in-training with the opportunity to pursue such specialisations.

By the completion of preservice teacher education, graduates must be adequately prepared to respond to the needs of **all** pupils in their classrooms. They should have demonstrated their knowledge of the range of learners with special educational needs they will encounter in the classroom, and of how to provide effectively for the management of these pupils and for their learning in different subjects of the curriculum. They will have a knowledge of the range and nature of specialist support staff available, including the strategies and resources used by specialist staff, and how to access the benefits of such services for their pupils.

Expertise in curriculum which focuses on individual needs of pupils

Graduate teachers completing teacher education courses must demonstrate an adequate understanding of the theory, principles and practices associated with the teaching and learning of spoken and written language, and of numeracy. Information about language and language development, about language learning difficulties, and of the learning experiences required by pupils to overcome specific problems, is an area of advanced studies that all teachers-in-training should be required to complete.

Teaching competencies acquired in these studies will be demonstrated through the ability to provide effective programs in spoken and written language and numeracy in different subject areas as well as using the competencies in language and numeracy studies as a central means of enhancing pupils' learning and ability to learn.

Teachers-in-training should also acquire skills in the analysis of the functional learning needs of their pupils, and develop individualised goals for learning in all subjects. The implementation of these goals necessarily involves knowledge of a variety of teaching strategies so that, as teachers, they can assist pupils overcome problems in learning. The effective education of children with learning difficulties requires the development of programs and teaching strategies that take account of individual differences.

To achieve these competencies, all teachers-in-training should undertake compulsory coursework which provides information and practical experiences of classroom management. They should be required to address the problems of individual learners whose needs are not catered for in whole-class or group approaches to teaching and learning. Preservice training assessment procedures should require teachers-in-training to demonstrate their competencies to meet these needs.

Student management: a classroom and child-centred issue

In day-to-day teaching practice, teachers are required to respond appropriately to the social and personal needs of their pupils. Techniques in behaviour management are especially important to assist children with behavioural problems. All teachers-in-training should undertake compulsory studies in behavioural management, including content about behavioural management strategies, and experiences in responding to children with personal, social and behavioural adjustment difficulties.

The effective education of children with social and emotional adjustment problems requires teachers to develop programs and teaching and management strategies that take account of individual pupil needs. To achieve these competencies, all teachers-in-training should undertake practical experiences in which they can learn and demonstrate a knowledge of effective management approaches.

Interpersonal skills: team work and team management

Teacher preparation courses, in providing an introduction to the management of classrooms and of individual pupils, will also take into account the place of the teacher in school-home-community networks. Teachers are expected to provide programs, management and provisions for pupils with special educational needs in collaboration and consultation with other staff members.

One new aspect of these partnerships is the increasingly significant role of other professionals in the lives of children with high support needs, and in the lives of their families. These staff members may include psychologists, therapists, medical practitioners, nurses and residential carers. Teachers need appropriate skills to be effectively involved with these professionals, and so complement and supplement the learning experiences from all aspects of a child's life and ensure that the efforts of all professionals are enhanced. Accordingly they must achieve mature interpersonal and negotiation skills, which are developed and fostered during preservice education.

Teachers-in-training can become familiar with team processes through shared field experiences and through interaction with support service staff, who may be teachers or staff drawn from other professions. Field experiences in alternative professional settings can provide, in the early stages of **all** professional preparation programs, an understanding of the interactive and cooperative roles of staff drawn from different disciplines as well as the unique contribution of each profession to the welfare and development of children and adolescents.

Teachers-in-training should also have experiences involving consulting, joint program development and negotiation with support staff. It is acknowledged that the provision of these experiences to large numbers of students enrolled in preservice education courses will require careful planning and management and the full cooperation of teacher employers.

An understanding of the parent-teacher partnership in education is also essential. As teachers, teachers-in-training will have to foster links with parents and other community members to support and facilitate programs for pupils with special educational needs in their classrooms. As part of their training, therefore, they should gain knowledge and experience in effective communication, problem solving and conflict resolution.

Field experiences: strong models and mentors

Teaching practice must be based on concepts and understandings drawn from theory and research. The linking of theory, research and practical experiences provides the basis for teachers to understand, identify and respond to individual learners' needs.

A consistent theme which emerges in reviews of teacher preparation programs is the importance of practical experiences which provide models of the highest quality, and opportunities for teachers-in-training to teach, reflect on, and learn from their

practice. Their placement for practical experiences should therefore involve matching them with experienced teachers with a high level of commitment, knowledge and skills.

Teaching and learning which is learner-centred and directed is a hallmark of special education philosophies and methods. The teacher as the manager of the learning environment, provides for pupil involvement and learning at a pace which accords with their existing knowledge and achievements. The teacher's role in this setting is one of collaborator, observer and assistant. Teacher preparation courses should therefore provide a view of teaching and learning, and of the management of teaching and learning, which emphasises that these are processes which are inextricably interwoven.

Practical experiences are required for teachers-in-training to participate in programs which promote a sensitivity to the wide variation of personal characteristics among pupils. It is vital that these activities provide opportunities for them to observe and implement practical approaches to the identification of learner needs, the planning of teaching programs to meet these needs, the implementation of appropriate teaching and management strategies, and the evaluation of learning outcomes.

Practical teaching experiences should also provide a preparation for developing curricula modules which permit the effective teaching of and learning by pupils with a range of educational needs. These experiences will provide an effective underpinning for each graduate's involvement in the education of all children in their classrooms, including those with special educational needs.

3 Review of teacher preparation courses

To establish the extent to which teachers-in-training in Queensland are provided with the knowledge, content and skills outlined in section 2, the Council reviewed the content of the teacher preparation courses offered in institutions of higher education. Courses offered by nine institutions of higher education were included.

At the time when the institutions forwarded documentation, many advised that new course statements were under development, and that many courses were under evaluation owing to the amalgamation of institutions. Eight of the nine institutions contacted provided

Table 1: SUMMARY OF PRESERVICE COURSES REVIEWED

Type & length of course	No. of institutions	No. of courses
Dip.T. : Three years	7	7
Grad.Dip. or Dip.Ed. : One year	6	8
B.Ed. (preservice) : Four years	2	4
Dip.T. : Three years (incomplete)	1	1
B.T. : Three years (incomplete)	1	1

completed documentation, and one sent selected units only. A summary of the courses reviewed is set out in Table 1.

Analysis of the documents was based on appraisal of unit objectives, content, reference lists and assignment work where provided by the institutions of higher education. The data extracted gave the proportion of content in each of the components outlined in section 2 above to overall course content, including a weighting of assessment tasks. In some instances, analysis was based on the short unit descriptions provided by the institutions.

It is acknowledged that emphasis in course content may at times relate to issues which would prepare teachers-in-training to provide support for children with special educational needs, but that this may not always be specified in the unit information provided. For example, teaching and curriculum may provide a general preparation for individualisation of teaching and management of children with special needs, but this may not be indicated in unit descriptions.

At best, the analysis can only provide an overview of the intentions of the institutions.

The results of the review are set out in Table 2 and exclude the two courses for which incomplete submissions were received (noted in Table 1). Courses have been grouped on the basis of duration of course, and ordered by year of submission. Data are reported as estimated percentages of overall course content. Where no information was available, entries have been noted "n/a".

Course objectives

All courses included objectives which indicated a concern for the needs of children and for individual learners. These included such statements as:

"promoting the equality of all ... with sensitivity for needs of handicapped."
"will demonstrate skills in providing for individual differences of pupils."
"ability to plan, implement, evaluate, using knowledge...and skills appropriate to individual needs of children."

Course content by duration

The approaches through which higher education institutions achieved the course objectives were reviewed with courses grouped according to duration. This factor obviously influenced the overall pattern of coursework offered by the institutions.

Three year courses

General theoretical frameworks outlining the social contexts of learning and the development of skills and learning, comprise about fifteen percent of total coursework in three year courses. Over half the courses also provide information about the nature of special educational needs. All courses, with the exception of the Dip.T. Manual Arts program, include experiences and information designed to develop student competencies in individualising learning.

REVIEW OF TEACHER PREPARATION COURSES

Table 2: REVIEW OF TEACHER PREPARATION COURSES

YEAR OF SUB-MISSION	COURSE	CONTENT: PREPARATION FOR TEACHING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS						FIELD EXPERIENCES
		Social Contexts	Development & Learning	Knowledge Students Spec. Needs	Individualised Programs	Managing students in class	Interpersonal skills	Aver. no. days per semester
		%	%	%	%	%	%	
Three year courses								
1990	Dip. T Man Art	4.2	8.4					12.5
1989	Dip. T	8.3	6.3	0.4	1.5	-	0.4	11.5
1988	Dip. T K-10	10.4	8.3		2.1*		2.1	15.0*
1988	Dip. T	5.6	5.6	2.8	2.1*	0.7*		16.0*
1987	Dip. T	4.6	7.5	1.0	3.3*	0.5	0.8	14.0*
1984	Dip. T	7.2	6.4	0.3	3.3*#			20.0*
1984	Dip. T	9.2	9.2		1.7*			23.0*
One year courses								
1990	G.Dip.Ed. SpecNeeds	12.5	12.5	6.3	25.0			n/a
1990	G.Dip.Ed. P-10	12.5	12.5		6.3			n/a
1990	G.Dip.Ed. 8-12	25.0						n/a
1989	G.Dip.Ed. 1-7	8.8	3.8					25.0
1989	G.Dip.Ed. 8-12	8.3	8.3	#				25.0
1989	G.Dip.Ed. 8-12	15.0	15.0			e*	e*	27.0e*
1984	G.Dip.Ed. 8-12	7.1	7.1			1.8*	7.1	20.0*
1984	G.Dip.Ed.	9.4	6.3	3.1	5.0*e	2.5	2.5	28.0*
Four year courses								
1989	B. Ed.	6.2	5.4	0.3	1.0		0.3	16.5
1989	B. Ed. K-10 p.	9.4	6.2		e*	e*	3.1	15.0*
1989	B. Ed. 0-8 p.	11.7	14.1	3.1	6.2*		1.6	15.0*
1989	B. Ed. 8-12 p.	6.3	5.9	0.3	1.6*		1.6	15.0*

e = elective
p = proposed

* linking theory and practice
\# focus on students with special needs in curriculum studies

It appears that information and experiences about individualising learning are often not strongly related to all subjects in the curriculum. Units and partial units included in submissions prepared before 1987, provided information on approaches designed to assist pupils with inadequate communication and numeracy skills. This trend is less apparent in the more recent submissions. Limited content appears to be devoted to the management of children, in particular those with behavioural adjustment disorders. Few courses appear to be designed to enhance student interpersonal skills.

Field experiences in most three year courses include opportunities for teachers-in-training to be involved in assessing and/or teaching children with special needs. One question which arises is the monitoring of student practice for which little information was provided. If these field experiences are to be effective, close supervision is required by teachers and lecturers with expertise in the education of children with special educational needs.

The difficulties in providing adequate supervision and support for large numbers of teachers-in-training was raised by one institution in a letter to the Council.

> *"With the transition from an elective to a core subject...the challenge to provide adequate fieldwork opportunities will be accentuated. We in turn would appreciate any information from members of your Council as to how the issue of providing fieldwork for large numbers of regular classroom teaching preservice students is dealt with in other tertiary institutions."*

In summary, three year teacher preparation courses provide teachers-in-training with a general orientation to the contexts of schooling and the general development of children. Rather limited attention appears to be paid to providing teachers with information about and appropriate pedagogical responses to learners with special educational needs. The approaches rely heavily on field experiences, which is a most appropriate approach if teachers-in-training are knowledgeable and if expert supervision is available.

One year courses

The nature of these courses appears to reflect the course structure which allows for preparing graduates for their teaching role in two semesters. As one institution has noted in its course submission:

> *"The pedagogical problem faced by single year full-time Diploma courses is the perceived need to fit into a truncated period of time all of the requirements of an extended undergraduate degree in Educational Studies. This is compounded by typical institutional constraints of tertiary scheduling, calendars, staff expertise and so forth."*

In response the institution seeks to provide a course which is:

> *"... reflected in the reconceptualisation of educational foundation studies, curriculum and teaching studies, and the provision of a three semester calendar... The proposed Graduate Diploma of Education...is based on the principle that a critical and self-reflective orientation towards teaching can be achieved through (1) an intensive program...and*

through a reconceptualised teacher education curricula which stresses (2) an interdisciplinary approach to the problematics of educational theory and research and (3) an integrated approach to the development of subject-specific teaching competence."

The approach adopted by most higher education institutions in providing one year courses appears, understandably, to focus attention on broad educational issues. Considerable emphasis is placed upon linking curriculum, theory and field experiences through periods of continuous and weekly school-based experiences.

Content about the nature of special educational needs or approaches to individualising learning appears to be limited. The exception is a Graduate Diploma of Education (Special Needs) course which provides a specialised focus in teacher preparation. In particular, courses preparing teachers for teaching in Years 8 to 12 - whether these courses are one, three or four year designs - appear to place considerable emphasis on effective teaching of standard curriculum. Little or no mention is accorded in unit outlines to learners requiring individual attention, or to curriculum which emphasises learner-relevant content, both of which are critical in providing education for learners with special educational needs.

One institution, however, has adopted an approach designed to enhance the ability of teachers in Years 8 to 12 to assist pupils with difficulties in language which could be applied more broadly. Staff with a background in language and reading are members of all curriculum studies teams, and approximately one-tenth of course time in each curriculum area is devoted to language and reading issues. If this type of focus to learning needs were provided in appropriate units by staff with expertise in special education, it would provide teachers-in-training with very useful experiences and knowledge.

Four year courses

Many institutions are anxious to expand their three year teacher preparation courses to four years, and not to limit such courses to the future teachers of pupils in Years 8 to 12. Only one institution provided information about a four year teacher preparation course which is currently on offer. Another provided information to the Council about a proposed course, with a common set of goals, offering three alternative patterns of study (i.e. teaching pupils in age ranges 0-8, or 4-15, or 12-17 years).

The coursework designed for teachers of children aged 0-8 provides extended studies of theoretical and philosophical contexts of education. It also provides more extensive information about and experiences with children with special educational needs and individualised approaches to teaching, than other courses reviewed.

The course for teachers of children aged 4-15, does not provide any specific special education studies. Instead, four elective subjects of a total of six on offer, are offered in counselling, assisting children with literacy and numeracy difficulties, and helping exceptional children in the classroom. Students are required to study two of six electives which include these four units. The course designed to prepare teachers-in-training to teach pupils in the 12-17 age range provides some content about special educational needs and some background about individualising teaching.

In the four year course outlined by the other institution, the additional year appears to be used to provide further non-education studies for the teachers-in-training.

The four year courses in general provide strong links between theory and practice, with attention to individual needs of pupils. The course profiles do not, however, appear to differ greatly from those currently on offer in three year courses in respect to preparation for teaching pupils with special needs in regular classrooms.

4 Issues in teacher preparation to educate pupils with special educational needs

As a result of the review of teacher education courses the Council identified the following issues as requiring urgent attention by institutions of higher education, registering authorities, and employers:

Reconceptualising preservice teacher education courses

In the face of multiple demands on higher education institutions for the inclusion of further content covering a wide range of areas of knowledge and experience advocated as important for effective teacher preparation, ways must be found to merge generalist and special education approaches to classroom teaching within teacher preparation courses. This approach mirrors current practice in the education of children with special educational needs in regular schools.

Provision of "special needs" subjects as self-contained modules in teacher preparation courses is not necessarily the most effective approach. Several courses offered by institutions of higher education in Queensland have, however, adopted this approach in which teachers-in-training explore issues relating to the special needs of children. Pupil disabilities and learning difficulties are introduced as one of a number of "issues" to be resolved in ensuring social justice for all pupils.

If this approach is followed, staff with academic qualifications and expertise in the education of children with special educational needs should be a member(s) of teaching teams providing the units, and can be expected to strengthen the quality of courses provided in all areas (Mittler, 1985; Stainback and Stainback, 1989). One institution in Queensland has, for example, moved towards including staff with expertise in language as members of all curriculum area teams.

The Council recommends an approach which adopts the incorporation of special education principles and practices as an essential component of general education practice. When applied to

the knowledge and skills referred to on page 10, and to all curriculum areas, this will allow teachers-in-training to view the needs of individual pupils as an essential element of the spectrum of their teaching responsibilities. This approach will require many institutions to reconceptualise their preservice courses.

Recommendation 1

That higher education institutions ensure their preservice teacher education programs incorporate the principles and practices relevant to teaching children with special educational needs within the relevant components of general education studies.

Recommendation 2

That staff with academic qualifications and expertise in special education be members of teaching teams providing the professional studies referred to in Recommendation 1.

Course content

The preservice education courses for prospective teachers inQueensland require them to consider issues pertaining to excellence in education and to social justice for all pupils. Teachers-in-training are provided with a broad set of information about the social contexts of schooling and an understanding of the nature of development and learning.

Teacher education institutions provide opportunities for teachers-in-training to link education theory, curriculum knowledge and practice. Knowledge in curriculum areas is an important emphasis in teacher education courses.

There appears, however, to have been a reduction in recently developed courses in the proportion of overall content devoted to enhancing student awareness of the specific nature of difficulties pupils may experience as learners and in their personal behaviour and social interactions in school settings. Few courses appear to provide teachers-in-training with knowledge and strategies to use in providing support for pupils with learning difficulties and behavioural adjustment disorders.

Nor do courses appear to foster the interpersonal skills teachers require as members of a teaching team or in adopting consultative and cooperative approaches to teaching. Teachers are expected to work cooperatively with staff from other professions to enhance the education of pupils who have special needs, and so require negotiating skills as well as an understanding of the professional roles of staff from other disciplines.

A knowledge of issues underlying the principles of social justice and experiences to heighten awareness of these principles, would provide teachers-in-training with important insights. These include an understanding and responsiveness to individual differences among children and adolescents and an understanding of the need for competencies to develop individualised learning experiences and strategies responsive to pupil needs.

Special education practice also strongly emphasises ways of working with parents, and involving the community in education.

Recommendation 3
That higher education institutions provide compulsory units of study to prepare teachers to support pupils with special educational needs.

Recommendation 4
That higher education institutions provide experience and content to prepare teachers to work cooperatively with staff members of relevant professional disciplines in supporting pupils with special educational needs.

Student selection and evaluation

The quality of students admitted to preservice teacher education courses is as important as the quality of the courses. In the United States the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1982) gave the highest priority to the following recommendation:

"Institutions of higher education should establish and maintain the highest criteria possible for admission to and continuation of prospective professionals in education...programs."

The Council can only agree with this recommendation. Teacher education institutions act as the first agency for selecting our future teachers. Council has noted the quality of many students entering the field today. The assessment of field experiences provides essential opportunities to monitor the practical teaching skills of teachers-in-training and their commitment to children.

Teacher education institutions should adopt procedures which ensure increased accountability in the preparation of teachers-in-training for their future responsibilities (The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1982). These procedures should include a requirement that graduating teachers demonstrate mastery of competencies relating to systematic individualisation of children's programs.

Evaluation should include the identification of a series of practical and specific competencies, instead of statements of broad requirements such as "competency in methods of teaching and managing children with special educational needs". Performance indicators should include information about the specific skills and knowledge to be acquired by prospective teachers.

It is also important that institutions of higher education provide opportunities for intending teachers to undertake school-based experiences as a small component of their undergraduate programs. These studies will provide opportunities for them to reflect on their own suitability for their proposed career paths, prior to their enrolment in longer-term studies in education.

The enthusiasm, commitment and vision of teachers newly entering the profession is vital to education in the future. It is crucial that they have the ability to articulate their commitment to children

and learning, and share and sustain their philosophy and insights with the colleagues they work with after graduation.

Recommendation 5

That higher education institutions develop criteria for the selection of students for admission to preservice teacher education courses as well as for continuing monitoring procedures over the duration of courses that will provide evidence of student commitment to the education of all children and the development of attitudes and skills necessary to address the range of special educational needs among pupils.

Teacher competencies required for graduation

The Council is attracted to the approach which advocates that graduating teachers should have demonstrated achievement of a basic set of teaching competencies, as evidence of their readiness for a teaching career. In respect to children with special educational needs, the Council's view is that all graduating teachers must demonstrate competencies based on:

- awareness and knowledge of pupils with special educational needs
- knowledge of practical approaches to providing for the needs of individual learners not catered for in whole-class or group approaches to teaching and learning
- knowledge of strategies for classroom and behavioural management
- knowledge of practical approaches for working cooperatively with other teachers and support staff from other disciplines
- personal maturity in interactions which require negotiating and problem solving skills.

Recommendation 6

That higher education institutions ensure graduating teachers demonstrate the range of teaching competencies set out above.

Teacher competencies required for registration

This issue is essentially linked to the above. That is, the requirements for formal registration as a teacher should include that graduating teachers will have demonstrated their knowledge of teaching and management of children and adolescents with special educational needs, and their competencies in providing appropriate individualised programs and management of their pupils.

Recommendation 7

That the Board of Teacher Registration requires higher education institutions to provide evidence that graduating teachers have acquired the competencies referred to in Recommendation 6 as a prerequisite to their formal registration as teachers.

Provision and supervision of practical experiences

Nearly all teacher preparation courses provide opportunities for teachers-in-training to interact with pupils with special learning needs. This is a vital component in preparing teachers to provide effective courses for these pupils. However observation or unsupervised experience for teachers-in-training is not sufficient.

Careful and detailed supervision by knowledgeable teachers of planned practical experiences, together with the use of teaching resources such as video records of practical teaching, accompanied by careful evaluation of teaching strategies used, resources, and interactions with pupils, are essential components of practice.

Appropriate preparation for these experiences is necessary to ensure teachers-in-training have adequate understanding of children's needs. Debriefing after practical experiences is also an essential component of field experiences.

Yet it is evident from the responses of higher education institutions that the provision of appropriate experiences and supervision is a major difficulty. It is critical in the development of committed and knowledgeable teachers that relevant experiences and supportive supervision are available. Issues which are unresolved in the practical teaching component of courses, but must be confronted include, ensuring:

- access to a range of field experiences, such as observation and teaching practice, to develop in teachers-in-training a commitment to children with special educational needs and a knowledge of practical strategies to assist in their education and management
- supervision of teachers-in-training by experienced effective teachers, and other staff with expertise in educating children with special educational needs
- resolution of industrial difficulties, including the funding of supervised practice teaching, to remove impediments to effective teacher training as a key course component.

Access for teachers-in-training in the early stages of their courses to alternative professional settings will greatly assist their understanding of the complementary roles of staff from other professional disciplines.

Recommendation 8

That unresolved matters associated with practical teaching experiences set out above be addressed by the higher education institutions, employing bodies, teachers' unions and the Board of Teacher Registration, with an expectation of resolution by the end of the 1991 school year and that the proposal for use of alternative professional settings in teaching practice be examined by the Department of Education in association with the Department of Health and the Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs.

Duration of training

The Council acknowledges the pressures to expand the content of teacher preparation courses and difficulties inherent in preparing primary and secondary classroom teachers within many of the time frames presently available to courses of teacher education. However, if teachers are to be prepared to meet the learning needs of the one-in-five pupils in classrooms who have special educational needs, it is evident that **new time frames linked to new approaches to teacher education** are needed for most courses.

Council recognises that the acquisition of skills and knowledge of the scope indicated above for children with special educational needs, as well as other disadvantaged pupils, may not be accommodated effectively within existing courses.

Other alternatives should also be considered. For example, full registration as a teacher could be withheld until additional studies are undertaken and competencies are completed in this and other areas of classroom teaching.

Courses of longer duration would allow opportunities to prescribe, or at least ensure, teachers-in-training have knowledge and experience of pupils with special educational needs. Such an extension of time should involve a complete review of course structure and content and include increased time given to curriculum development, management of pupils and individualised teaching programs, and practical experiences which ensure teachers are more effective in supporting pupils with special needs.

Extension of teacher preparation courses should not provide "more of the same", but focus on the wider range of individual pupil needs. Teachers must be equipped to assess, plan for, provide programs, and respond to individual children's learning needs, and not view any class as a functional teaching unit.

In supporting an extension of time for preservice teacher preparation courses, Council sees such a development as an opportunity to ensure a greater emphasis on better teaching and better outcomes for all children and adolescents in schools.

Recommendation 9
That the Minister seek the agreement of the Commonwealth Government and of higher education institutions to an extension of the duration of preservice training, i.e.:
- the extension of three year undergraduate courses by one year
- the extension of one year graduate courses by one semester
and that the extension of these teacher education courses be linked to a review of course structure and content to ensure teachers are better prepared to support pupils with special educational needs.

5. Teacher preparation in the 1990s

Teacher preparation: teacher competencies

The Council believes teacher preparation courses must provide a strong foundation for teachers' commitment to meet the learning and personal needs of all children and adolescents, and particularly pupils with special educational needs. This commitment should be matched by a level of knowledge and skills among teachers which ensure appropriate provisions for all pupils.

This report includes advice by Council about:

- proposals on **components of courses and practical teaching experiences** addressing the education of pupils with special educational needs in teacher preparation courses (page 20)
- **the provision of adequately supervised field experiences** including demonstrations of and opportunities to provide teaching programs to individual learners (pages 22 and 23)
- the **duration of teacher preparation programs** (pages 23 and 24)
- **reconceptualising teacher preparation courses** by institutions of higher education (pages 19 and 20)
- **the selection of students** for preservice teacher education to ensure prospective teachers are of the highest possible calibre (pages 21 and 22)
- **teacher competencies required for graduation and registration** (page 22)

The Council urges that the Board of Teacher Registration take a strong lead in specifying registration requirements, including a basic set of competencies required by graduate teachers if they are to meet the wide range of needs of children and adolescents in regular schools.

Professional education: an ongoing commitment by all teachers

Preservice teacher education has acknowledged limitations as preparation for a teaching career. As currently structured, it cannot cover the full range of knowledge, content and professional skills teachers ultimately will need in their classrooms. During the early stages of their careers, teachers should participate in induction programs including the provision of mentors and other forms of collegiate support. Support staff with specialist knowledge of children and adolescents with special educational needs also have an important role to play in induction arrangements.

A commitment by governments and employers is required to ensure that adequate specialist staff are available to support pupils with special educational needs, their regular school teachers and their parents. This involves an continuing commitment by institutions of higher education to provide post-graduate training. Employers will need to fund selected teachers wishing to fulfil support roles and need to undertake specialist inservice courses.

Continuing professional development is necessary for **all** teachers and must be recognised by school communities, employers and governments. Preservice education, linked to induction for graduates on entering a teaching career, must be followed by inservice training continued throughout a teacher's professional career. Inservice training must be school focused, but be planned for and provided by a coalition comprising schools, employing bodies and institutions of higher education.

Successful participation in all these stages of professional education should be mandatory for all teachers and administrators. Learning new skills and renewing skills and procedures to assist children with special educational needs must be a key focus of this program. The documentation accompanying one course reviewed in section 3 notes:

> *"There is now a considerable body of research and theory on the practicum. It has led to a reconceptualisation of the practicum across the traditional boundaries of preservice, induction and inservice stages and views the clinical education of teachers as a developmental process over a career."*

The Council fully supports this position and proposes in the future to prepare an advice paper on meeting the wider range of pupil needs through inservice teacher education. Teacher education must be viewed as a continuum - commencing with entry into preservice education, supported by mentor and induction programs in the early years of professional experience, and continued through inservice education and shared professional exchanges until retirement.

A teacher without a personal commitment to and involvement in such a 'learning' program is unlikely to be an effective teacher for all learners encountered during a career.

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Appendix

Review of Literature

TEACHER COMPETENCIES NEEDED

Attitudes and concerns

Doubts of some regular classroom teachers that they would be able to cater effectively for students with special educational needs (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1982-84)

As many as nine teachers in ten in regular classrooms in one study in the USA reported they lacked the skills to educate children with special needs in their classrooms (Jones and Messenheimer-Young, 1989; Thousand,1988).

Regular teachers have a fear of failure if they attempt to cater for special needs students (Gow.L., Snow, D., Balla, J. & Hall, J. 1986).

Teachers are usually uncertain rather than apathetic, and that this is a major cause of anxiety for teachers of students with physical and sensory impairments: this anxiety disappears after they have experience with students with these impairments (Jenkinson, 1983).

PRESERVICE COURSES: SUGGESTED CONTENT

Attitudes and concerns

TEACHER COMPETENCIES NEEDED	PRESERVICE COURSES: SUGGESTED CONTENT
Knowledge about students with special needs	**Knowledge about students with special needs**
Lack of understanding by school staff of the student's special needs (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1982-1984).	Need to emphasise an active learning approach, involving role playing, simulations, and problem solving approaches during preservice education for teachers (Woolfsen, 1987).
Regular teachers do not have sufficient understanding of individual children, and especially those with special needs (Gow.L., Snow, D., Balla, J. & Hall, J. 1986).	Information is needed about the characteristics of disabilities, causes and prevention, availability of related services, screening procedures and placement. Information relating to legislation dominates US teacher preparation courses (Jones & Messenheimer-Young, 1989).
Acceptance of disability was rated as the most significant needs by teachers surveyed by Croll & Shank (1983).	Need for knowledge about service delivery models particularly in relation to supporting students with behavioural adjustment difficulties to be included in preservice education courses (Joyce & Wienke, 1989).
Knowledge about characteristics of development, learning, individual difference	**Knowledge about characteristics of development, learning, individual difference**
Need for knowledge about general characteristics of development and the nature of learning of all children (Hudson, Morsink, Branscum, & Boone, 1987).	Conceptual or procedural knowledge which assists in decision making and teaching strategies, including information about the nature of intelligence as a function of cumulative knowledge with a metacognitive component: should be included in preservice education courses as this knowledge assists teachers in catering for individual differences (Wong, 1989).
Need for knowledge of individual difference and differences in growth/ development (Hudson, Morsink, Branscum, & Boone, 1987).	
Need for information about language development (Hudson, Morsink, Branscum & Boone, 1987).	

TEACHER COMPETENCIES NEEDED

Curriculum issues, e.g. development, application, sequence, selection of resources and classroom experiences

Regular teachers do not plan teaching for small groups/individuals based on diagnostic information (Hudson, Morsink, Branscum, & Boone (1987). Regular teachers claim they need extensive assistance in the basic skill areas to cater for individual differences (Gow.L, Snow, D., Balla, J. & Hall, J. 1986).

Teachers need to have the skills to modify curricula and teaching methods to provide more effectively for students with disabilities (UNESCO, 1985; Croll & Shank, 1983).

The following specific teaching competencies were identified by Hudson, Morsink, Branscum, & Boone (1987) as necessary to assist students with learning difficulties:

- ways children learn basic skills, and problems encountered by students
- select/design materials and activities match pupils' learning needs and objectives set
- plan sequence of instruction which enables students with learning difficulties to meet lesson objectives
- plan continuous evaluation about achievements of students with learning difficulties
- awareness and ability to implement specialised programs
- knowledge of affective curricula for social deficits
- implement programs which help students with learning difficulties engage in self monitoring and metacognitive behaviours
- select appropriate strategies for individual students

PRESERVICE COURSES: SUGGESTED CONTENT

Curriculum issues, e.g. development, application, sequence, selection of resources and classroom experiences

Knowledge of the basic skills of language arts and mathematics is needed by teachers-in-training as it assists teachers in catering for individual differences (Wong, 1989).

Practical knowledge involving the application of conceptual knowledge and content knowledge based on knowledge about strategy research, error analysis, comprehension research should be included in teacher preparation courses. This assists teachers in catering for individual difference (Wong 1989).

Student teachers should be involved in the adaptation of study modules or lessons for use with students with special needs (Wong, 1989).

Teachers-in-training should be encouraged to employ metacognitive knowledge to reflect about their own teaching competencies. Such an awareness of personal teaching decisions assists in establishing goals for students and reasons for selecting goals/content (Thousand, 1988).

TEACHER COMPETENCIES NEEDED	PRESERVICE COURSES: SUGGESTED CONTENT
Continued	
• apply instruction, using appropriate feedback • involve students with learning difficulties as active respondents • increase problem solving behaviours of students.	
Classroom management skills Regular teachers do not have the skills to individualise or even to group children effectively (Gow.L., Snow, D., Balla, J. & Hall, J. 1986). Teachers need to have the skills to implement a behaviour management system in the classroom (Hudson, Morsink, Branscum, & Boone, 1987). Teachers need to prevent behaviour management problems through effective classroom management (Hudson, Morsink, Branscum, & Boone, 1987).	**Classroom management skills** Practical knowledge involving applications of cognitive behaviour modification and based on research should be included teacher education courses, as this assists teachers in catering for individual difference (Wong, 1989). Training should focus on development of counselling skills, and classroom management skills to assist students with behaviour adjustment problems (Gow,L., Snow, D., Balla, J. & Hall, J., 1986). An ability to provide a positive classroom management and implement behavioural management programs for pupils with behavioural adjustment difficulties is an important component of teacher education courses (Joyce & Wienke, 1989).
Interpersonal skills Teachers recognise the need for support services but they need assistance in learning to teach cooperatively and to capitalise on consultancy services (Jenkinson, 1983). Teachers require a knowledge of appropriate ways to interact with other professionals and ancillary staff (Croll & Shank, 1983).	**Interpersonal skills**

Advisory Council for Special Educational Needs

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	Mr R. Ferguson Associate Director Special Education Services (from 6 November 1990)
	Mr J. Burge Assistant Regional Director, Sunshine Coast Regional Office, Department of Education
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One nominee of the Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs	Miss R. Shepherd Deputy Director-General Disability Support
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One representative from Teacher Education Institutions	Dr G.C. Elias Senior Lecturer Division of Education Mt Gravatt Campus Griffith University
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	Professor J. Elkins Professor of Special Education University of Queensland

One representative of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission	Mr J. Kemp Senior Education Officer Central Support Services
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